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Interest in our Editorial on Sir William Osler which appeared in the July 2004 issue of the Journal¹ has been so gratifying that the Journal will publish a selection of his often quoted, now classic words of wisdom and expertise.

The editors of *The Quotable Osler*, Doctors Mark E. Silverman, T. Jock Murray, and Charles S. Bryan, divided Dr. Osler's Quotes into Personal Qualities; the Art and Practice of Medicine; the Medical Profession; Diagnosis; Disease, Specific Illnesses, Life Style, Drugs; Medical Education; Men and Women, Aging, History; Science and Truth; and Faith, Religion, Melancholy, Death.

Most of Osler's thoughts are still pertinent today, just as those of Hippocrates.

Read, enjoy, and think of the selections of Oslerisms. Additional quotes will appear in future issues of the Journal, with permission of the American College of Physicians.

The bold numbers after quotation sources indicate location in the American College of Physicians volume.

Medicine is an art.

The practice of medicine is an art, based on science.

Teacher and Student, in Aequanimitas, 34. 134

Medicine is an art of probability.

Medicine is a science of uncertainty and an art of probability.

Bean WB. Sir William Osler: Aphorisms, 129. 133

Medicine is an honored profession.

I would rather tell you of a profession honored above all others; one which, while calling forth the highest powers of the mind, brings you into such warm personal contact with your fellow-men that the heart and sympathies of the coldest nature must needs be enlarged thereby.

Introductory Address at the Opening of the 45th Session of the Medical Faculty, McGill College.

Can Med Surg J 1877-78;6:193-210. 200

Oslerisms

Take a lady's hand.

Taking a lady's hand gives her confidence in her physician.

Bean WB. Sir William Osler: Aphorisms, 130. 141

The practice of medicine is what you make it.

To each one of you the practice of medicine will be very much as you make it – to one a worry, a care, a perpetual annoyance; to another, a daily joy and a life of as much happiness and usefulness as can well fall to the lot of man.

The Student Life, in Aequanimitas, 423. 145

Work and interest are keys to success.

The medical profession is one in which every man can make a success, ... if he will work hard, study hard, and take an interest in his patients.

Dr. Osler to Students. Oklahoma Med J 1900;8:53. 204

Do not take hope away from the patient.

What is your duty in the matter of telling a patient that he is probably the subject of an incurable disease? ... One thing is certain; it is not for you to don the black cap, and, assuming the judicial function, take hope from any patient – "hope that comes to all."

Lectures on Angina Pectoris and Allied States, 142. 143

Cultivate a method of studying.

Let me add a word of advice on the method of studying. The secret of successful working lies in the systematic arrangement of what you have to do, and in the methodical performance of it. With all of you this is possible, for few disturbing elements exist in the student's life to interrupt the allotted duty which each hour of the day should possess. Make out, each one for himself, a time-table, with the hours of lecture, study, and recreation, and follow closely and conscientiously the program there indicated. I know of no better way to accomplish a large amount of work, and it saves the mental worry and anxiety which will surely haunt you if your tasks are done in an irregular and desultory way.

Introductory Lecture, 11. 107

The virtue of method is a secret to success.

Ask of any active business man or a leader in a profession the secret which enables him to accomplish much work, and he will reply in one word, system; or as I shall term it, the Virtue of Method, the harness without which only the horses of a genius travel.

Teacher and Student, in Aequanimitas, 34. 103

The master-word in medicine is work.

I propose to tell you the secret of life as I have seen the game played, and as I have tried to play it myself... Though a little one, the master-word looms large in meaning. It is the open sesame to every portal, the great equalizer in the world, the true philosopher's stone, which transmutes all the base metal of humanity into gold. The stupid man among you it will make bright, the bright man brilliant, and the brilliant student steady. With the magic word in your heart all things are possible, and without it all study is vanity and vexation. The miracles of life are with it; the blind see by touch, the deaf hear with eyes, the dumb speak with fingers. To the youth it brings hope, to the middle-aged confidence, to the aged repose. True balm of hurt minds, in its presence the heart of the sorrowful is lightened and consoled. It is directly responsible for all advances in medicine during the past twenty-five centuries.... And the master-word is *Work*, a little one, as I have said, but fraught with momentous sequences if you can but write it on the tablets of your hearts, and bind it upon your foreheads.

The Master-Word in Medicine, in Aequanimitas, 356-7. 98

Punctuality is a prime essential for a physician.

Punctuality is the prime essential of a physician – if invariably on time he will succeed even in the face of professional mediocrity.

Holman E. Sir William Osler: Teacher and Bibliophile.

JAMA 1969;210:2223-5. 102

The medical society can prevent a stale mind.

We doctors do not “take stock” often enough, and are very apt to carry on our shelves stale, out-of-date goods. The society helps to keep a man “up to the times,” and enables him to refurnish his mental shop with the latest wares. Rightly used, it may be a touchstone to which he can bring his experiences to the test and save him from falling into the rut of a few sequences. It keeps his mind open and receptive, and counteracts that tendency to premature senility which is apt to overtake a man who lives in a routine.

On the Medical Society, in Aequanimitas, 337. 228

The medical society is a corrective to egoism.

No class of men need friction so much as physicians; no class gets less. The daily round of a busy practitioner tends to develop and egoism of a most intense kind, to which there is no antidote. The few set-backs are forgotten. The mistakes are often buried, and ten years of successful work tends to make a man touchy, dogmatic, intolerant of correction and abominably self-centered. To this mental attitude the medical society is the best corrective, and a man misses a good part of his education who does not get knocked about a bit by his colleagues in discussions and criticisms.

The Function of a State Faculty.
Maryland Med J 1897;37:73-7. 233

Medical societies promote harmony and good-fellowship.

By no means the smallest advantage [of medical societies] is the promotion of harmony and good-fellowship. Medical men, particularly in smaller places, live too much apart and do not see enough

of each other. In large cities, we rub each other's angles down and carom off each other without feeling the shock very much, but it is an unfortunate circumstance that in many towns the friction, being on a small surface, hurts; and mutual misunderstandings arise to the destruction of all harmony.

The Growth of a Profession. Can Med Surg J 1885-86;14:129-55.

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Be involved in professional associations.

You cannot afford to stand aloof from your professional colleagues in any place. Join their associations, mingle in their meetings, giving of the best of your talents, gathering here, scattering there; everywhere showing that you are at all times a faithful student, as willing to teach as to be taught.

The Army Surgeon, in Aequanimitas, 110. 230

Reference

1. Goldstein, N. Sir William Osler, Editorial Haw Med Jour, July 2004

Doctors and Neckties

Dr. Russ Stodd's “Weathervanes” brings a smile to the faces of our readers.

When previewing this month's Weathervane, it brought a big grin to my face. “A pure heart is a good thing. So is a clean shirt,” reminded me of Rounds made with Kekuni Blaisdell MD, John Smith MD, and staff doctors of the old Saipan Hospital in Micronesia in 1970.

The highlight of Dermatology Rounds was visiting a 40 year-old Micronesian woman with xanthoma tuberosum, potato-like cholesterol tumors on her elbows. Her cholesterol was 1400!

Together we saw many medical, orthopedic, and dermatological “fascinomas” and were able to help the Saipan staff with their problem cases. I recall wearing a white shirt and tie, my usual attire in the 1970's. My co-consultants wore Aloha shirts. The Micronesian staff were also dressed in short-sleeved shirts with no ties. The intern from a California exchange program was “Best Dressed.” It was so hot and humid in the old hospital that he actually took off his shirt for Rounds. He was wearing shorts and slippers. We were all envious but kept on our dripping shirts.

The old hospital is now replaced by a modern air-conditioned one, but ties are never worn, even by visiting consultants.

Erratum

The Editor's Note to the Special Contribution “Walking in Peace,” regarding “Hearts for Peace” promoted by Inam Rahman, M.D., stated “Inam had to resign in order to run for political office.”¹ This was incorrect information. Inam continues to serve as President-elect of the Hawaii Medical Association.

Reference

1. Fukuhara, D. Walking in Peace, HMJ June 2004; 63:174